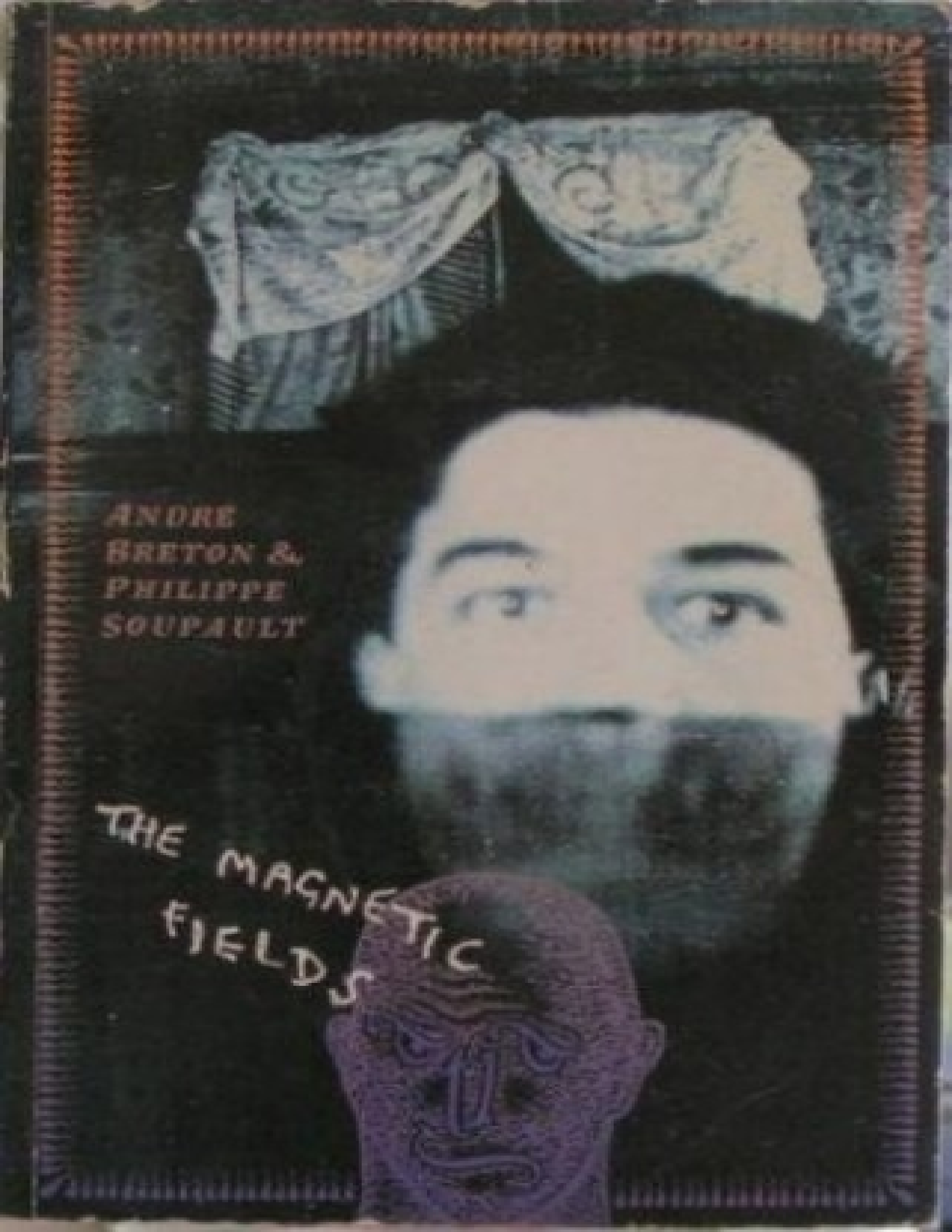
ANDRE
BRETON &
PHILIPPE
SOUPAULT
THE MAGNETIC
FIELDS

ANDRÉ BRETON (1896–1966), the son of a Norman policeman and a seamstress, studied medicine in Paris and was drafted to serve in World War I in 1915. While working on a neurological ward, he met Jacques Vaché, a devotee of Alfred Jarry, and Vaché's rebellious spirit and suicide at the age of twenty-three would powerfully shape Breton's sensibility. Thanks to the auspices of Paul Valéry, Breton worked as an assistant to Marcel Proust, and in 1919, along with Philippe Soupault and Louis Aragon, he founded the journal *Littérature*. *The Magnetic Fields*, the first book of automatic writing, appeared in 1920, and in 1924, having broken with Tristan Tzara and the Dadaists, Breton issued the *Surrealist Manifesto*. A Marxist, an atheist, and always a surrealist, Breton was a prolific author and a pugnacious controversialist whose works include the collection of poems *Claire de terre* and the novel *Nadja*.

PHILIPPE SOUPAULT (1897–1990), the son of a prominent and wealthy Parisian doctor, published his first book of poems, *Aquarium*, with the help of Guillaume Apollinaire, in 1917. Apollinaire introduced Soupault to André Breton, and the two, together with Louis Aragon, were active Dadaists before hoisting the banner of surrealism in 1924, when they identified *The Magnetic Fields* as the inaugural surrealist text. Excluded from the surrealist movement as "too literary" in 1926, Soupault continued to write poetry and move in artistic circles throughout his life, while also making a career as a journalist, and in the 1930s, together with his wife, the German photographer Ré Richter, he traveled and reported from all over the world. From 1937 to 1940, Soupault directed the antifascist Radio Tunis. Arrested by the collaborationist Vichy government, Soupault spent six months in prison, before escaping to North Africa in 1942. Beginning in 1943, he served as the American press officer, based in New York, for the Free French forces of Charles de Gaulle; his friends in exile included Man Ray, Fernand Léger, Marcel Breuer, and Kurt Weill. After the war, he taught briefly at Swarthmore College. Soupault was a prolific author of novels, plays, essays, memoirs, and poetry, and he translated William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* into French.

CHARLOTTE MANDELL has translated more than forty books, including works by Maurice Blanchot, Jean Genet, and Jean-Luc Nancy. Her translation of Mathias Énard's *Compass* was short-listed for the Man Booker International Prize in 2017 and received the National Translation

Award in 2018. Her translation of previously unpublished short stories by Proust, *The Mysterious Correspondent and Other Stories*, is forthcoming. She is currently working on a new translation of *Monsieur Teste* by Paul Valéry for NYRB Classics, and lives in the Hudson Valley with her husband, the poet Robert Kelly. Her website is http://www.charlottemandell.com.

André Breton
and
Philippe Soupault
The Magnetic Fields

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY CHARLOTTE MANDELL

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ANDRÉ BRETON

PHILIPPE SOUPAULT

The Two-Way Mirror

Prisoners of drops of water, we are nothing but perpetual animals. We run through noiseless cities and the enchanted posters no longer touch us. What's the use of these huge fragile enthusiasms, these dried-out leaps of joy? We know nothing but dead stars; we look at faces; and we sigh with pleasure. Our mouths are drier than lost beaches; our eyes turn aimlessly, hopelessly. There's nothing now but these cafés where we meet to drink these cold beverages, these mixed drinks, and the tables are stickier than these sidewalks where our dead shadows from the day before have fallen.

Sometimes, the wind wraps its big cold hands around us and ties us to trees cut out by the sun. We all laugh and sing, but no one feels his heart beating anymore. Fever abandons us.

The marvelous train stations no longer shelter us: the long corridors frighten us. So we have to suffocate some more to live through these dull minutes, these centuries in rags. We used to love the year-end suns, the narrow plains where our gazes flowed like those raging rivers of our childhood. Now there's nothing but reflections in these woods restocked with absurd animals and well-known plants.

The cities we don't want to love anymore are dead. Look around you: there's nothing now but sky and these big vacant lots we'll end up hating. With our fingers we touch these tender stars that used to people our dreams. Over there, we were told there were prodigious valleys: cavalcades lost forever in this Far West as boring as a museum.

When the great birds take flight, they leave without a cry and the streaked sky no longer resounds with their calls. They pass over lakes, over fertile marshes; their wings push aside the all-too-languid clouds. We are no longer even permitted to sit down: immediately, laughter rises up and we have to shout out all our sins.

One day whose color everyone has forgotten, we discovered walls that were quiet and stronger than monuments. We were there and our wide-open eyes let joyful tears escape. We said: "The planets and the first-magnitude stars cannot compare with us. So what is this great power more terrible than air? Beautiful August nights, adorable seaside twilights, we mock you! Bleach and the lines on our hands will direct the world. Mental chemistry of our plans, you are stronger than these cries of agony and than the hoarse voices of factories!" Yes, that night more beautiful than all the others, we could cry. Women passed by and held out their hands to us, offering us their

smiles like a bouquet. The cowardliness of the days before wrenched our hearts, and we turned away our heads so as not to see the sprays of water that linked the other nights.

Now there was only ungrateful death that respected us.

Each thing is in its place, and no one can speak anymore: every sense was paralyzed and the blind were more dignified than we.

We were shown factories for inexpensive dreams and stores full of obscure tragedies. There was a magnificent cinema where the roles were played by old friends. We would lose sight of them and then would always find them again in the same place. They gave us rotten sweetmeats and we told them about our vague happinesses. With their eyes fixed on us, they spoke: Can anyone really remember those heinous words, their sleeping songs?

We gave them our heart, which was nothing but a pale song.

•

Tonight, there are two of us in front of this river overflowing with our despair. We can't even think anymore. Words escape from our twisted mouths, and when we laugh, passersby turn around, terrified, and hurry home.

They don't know how to scorn us.

We think of the lights in the bars, of the grotesque dances in those ruined houses where we left the day. But nothing is more distressing than the light that streams gently over roofs at five in the morning. The streets silently diverge and the boulevards become animated: a lingering idler smiles near us. He hasn't seen our eyes full of vertigo and he passes slowly by. It's the noises from the milk vans that make our torpor fly away and the birds rise up into the sky to look for divine food.

Today again (but when will this limited life end) we will go find our friends, and we'll drink the same wines. They'll see us again on the terraces of cafés.

He is far away, the one who knows how to return that leaping cheerfulness to us. He lets the dusty days flow by and he no longer listens to what we say. "Have you forgotten our voices wrapped in affections and our remarkable gestures? Do the animals from free countries and abandoned seas no longer torment you? I can still see those struggles and those red outrages that strangled us. My dear friend, why do you want to

say nothing more about your waterproof memories?" The air with which only yesterday we were filling our lungs is becoming unbreathable. There is nothing to do now but look straight ahead of you, or close your eyes: if we turned our heads, vertigo would creep over to us.

Itineraries broken and all journeys at an end, can we really confess them? Abundant landscapes have left us with a bitter taste on our lips. Our prison is built of beloved books, but we can no longer escape ourselves, because of all these passionate odors that put us to sleep.

Our habits, delirious mistresses, call to us: they're disjointed whinnies, silences even heavier. They're those posters that insult us; we loved them so. Color of days, perpetual nights, will you too abandon us?

•

The immense smile of the whole earth was not enough for us: we need greater deserts, these suburb-less cities and these dead seas.

•

We are nearing the end of Lent. Our skeletons show like trees through the successive dawns of the flesh where a child's desires sleep with fists clenched. The weakness is extreme. Even yesterday, we were slipping over wonderful husks as we passed by the haberdashery shops. This must now be what is conventionally called adulthood: looking to the side, didn't we look onto a sad square lit up before night fell? The farewell meetings that take place there hunt for the last time the animals whose hearts are pierced with arrows.

Hanging from our mouths, the pretty phrases found in letters obviously have nothing to fear from the diabolos of our hearts, which come back to us from so high up that their beats are uncountable.

It's under the light of a platinum wire that we cross this bluish gorge at the bottom of which the corpses of broken trees sojourn and from which rises the odor of creosote that they say is good for the health.

Those who don't even want to be adventurers also live out in the open; they don't let themselves be carried away by their feverish imaginations and, from the train they're on, way down: nothing opposes what they pull from the dross of the glass trinkets that tame certain tribes. They slowly become aware of their strength, which is to know how to remain motionless in the midst of men who doff their hats and women who smile at you through a hawk moth (genus *Sphinx*). They wrap their freezing words in

silver foil, saying “Let the big birds throw stones at us, they will hatch nothing in our depths” and wouldn’t change places with fashion plates. I laugh, you laugh, he laughs, we laugh with tears as we lift up the worm the workers want to kill. We have puns on our lips and constrained songs.

•

One day, we’ll see great wings darken the sky, and it will be enough to let ourselves suffocate in the musky air of everywhere. How fed up we are with the sound of bells and with making ourselves afraid! True stars of our eyes, how long do you take to revolve around the head? You no longer let yourselves slide down into the cirques and so now the sun scornfully ruffles the eternal snows! Two or three guests take off their scarves. When the sequined liqueurs no longer make a night beautiful enough in their throats, they will light the gas stove. Don’t speak to us of universal consent; it’s no longer time for the reasonings of Eau de Botot mouthwash and we finally put a veil over our toothed wheel which made such good calculations. We scarcely regret not being able to attend the reopening of the celestial store whose windows are covered so early in whitewash.

What separates us from life is something quite other than this little flame running over asbestos like a sandy plant. Nor are we thinking of the flighty song of the electroscope’s gold leaves that can be found in certain top hats, although we wore one of those in society.

•

The window carved into our flesh opens out onto our heart. There you see an immense lake where at noon golden-brown dragonflies fragrant as peonies come to rest. What is this great tree where animals go to look at each other? For centuries we’ve been pouring out things for it to drink. Its gullet is drier than straw and ash has immense sediments in it. We laugh too, but you must not look for long without a telescope. Everyone can pass by here in this bloody hallway where our sins are hung, delicious paintings though dominated by gray.

We have only to open our hands and our chests to be as naked as this sunny day. “You know that tonight there is a green crime to commit. How little you know, my poor friend. Open this huge door and tell me it’s completely night out, that the day has died for the last time.”

•

History goes back into the textbook silver-plated with pinpricks and the most brilliant actors prepare their entrances. They are plants of great beauty more male than female and often both at once. They tend to coil up many times before dying out as ferns. The most charming ones take the trouble to calm us with hands of sugar and spring arrives. We don’t hope to take them away from the underground layers with the different species of fish. This dish would make a good impression on any table. It’s too bad we’re no longer hungry.

Seasons

I leave the Salles Dolo early in the morning with Grandfather. The little one would like a surprise. Those penny cones were not without great influence over my life. The innkeeper's name is Tyrant. I often find myself in that beautiful room with the cubic measures. The print on the wall is a daydream that always depicts itself. A man whose cradle is in the valley reaches with a neat beard at forty the top of a mountain and begins to decline gently. Beggars were pronouncing *chatieau*. There were adorable children's tantrums about those fat plants you apply to corns; there were fleurs-de-lis preserved in eau-de-vie when you fell.

I began to love the blue fountains before which people kneel. When the water is not troubled (trouble the night water, laze about in this world), you see gushing from the stones particles of gold that fascinate the toads. Human sacrifices are explained to me. How I listen to the drums by the brook! That's what they call the uncovered place where the water is made of all those movements of peasant women. The grass sucks down, at night, a quantity of white pebbles and speaks louder than echoing caves. Standing on the big dark swing, I mysteriously wave a branch of laurel leaves. (That comes from the time when they sat me on their knees.) A story has never been able to put me to sleep and I find a meaning in my little lies from before, pretty serviceberry trees of the forest. Ah! will this be vacation forever, and these games on the full warpath where I am chief?

•

Little whistles. I liked you too, suburb with your houses of sorrows, your pitiful gardening. Subdivisions, I have your map in little deserted agencies. Fishing rights are included. Round trip in third class taking place at the reminder of the next day's lesson or the big blue traps of the day. I slightly mistrust radiant train stations and even temperate waiting rooms, as well as the enigmatic punching of tickets. But I hold a charming hand as I climb up into the fragrance of honeysuckle. Frightful daisy crowns remind me of little girls on the day of their first communion; I descend a monumental staircase with valuable books. I see nothing from school except some collections of journals. Picturesque Scenes with that so-rare ragpicker, the Great Cities of the World (I liked Paris). I fear the coolness of visitors' rooms and the entrance of the man who comes to record absences. Recreations to play dodgeball are too far away. Based on the way André Chénier's "The Young Captive" was recited, I chose my first friend. We

crush sweet mint pastilles like the first cowardices. The schoolyard is assembled by the categorical imperatives of the prefect of studies. School desks sail three-masted over the zero for conduct with the surprising dust of transoms that we will find a way to close. I do what I can so my parents will have lots of people over in the evenings. I greatly admire that gentleman's cane; that's the first news I've had of Ethiopia. His nephew offered to send me some tortoises from over there: that is, I do believe, the finest promise anyone ever made me, and I am also still waiting for those flowers from Nice, a calendar engraving. Now the prayers are withdrawing; I begin to believe in bluer dresses in front of the bed with the lace coverlet, a work of my mother's. We gradually begin to hope for other proportions than those of the supremely sad scenes of parents' conversations. I think I was very well brought up. At a happier age, they would not have made me enter as a cannonball into a guest bedroom where, I don't really know why, they were witnessing the last moments of General Hoche. His plumed hat was supposed to cover his entire face, and I know very well it was no longer light out. They left me for a few days in that miserable lodging where not a single seat sat up straight. It was much later that the courage came to me to resist the advances of doors. I would go down alone now into the cellar, if I still don't know how to keep my balance on the salt marshes of certain key janglings. The nighttime whitening of the grass has a way of surprising those who have the habit of sleeping under the stars.

•

How is it that I can't see the end of this lane of poplars? The lady in it must barely emerge from the fable so that she can dare to speak loudly in the big tides of wind. I can still hear her very well when I place my ear against my hand like a shell; she will turn in July or August. She's sitting opposite me in trains that no longer depart; she wants that little branch she dropped onto the tracks. The Maison Blanche track leads to the most delightful fog. Feather snares to catch stringed birds. You know that I threw her one day into an uncultivated lot and I think no more of her than that. Mouth, bitter trace, and poplar are one. Step by step, I see nothing to gain from these sincere emotions.

•

I have always pitied plants that rest on the tops of walls. Of all the passersby who have slid over me, the handsomest one as he disappeared left

me this tuft of hair, these gillyflowers, without which I'd be lost for you. He must necessarily have retraced his steps before me. I mourn him. Those who love me find furtive excuses in that. It's because they see me easily embarked on an eternity of smooth little ruptures and accompany me with their good wishes. I am threatened (what don't they say?) with a lively rose, a continual rain, or a false step on my verges. They look at my eyes like glowworms if it's night out or else they take a few steps into me on the shadow side. I have reached the limit of that aromatic knowledge and I could cure the sick if I liked. They say I am inventing an advertisement for the sky! Everything moves forward at the order. What did I want? Those scrubbed squares of stars, really? More enterprising people will stir up little patches of froth: cruel death. There are wizards so wretched that their cauldrons serve to boil clouds and that's not the end of the matter.

•

I only move forward with care in swampy places, and I look at the aerial tips that become fused at the time of the skies. I swallow my own smoke that looks so like another's chimera. Avarice is a fine sin covered in algae and sunny incrustations. With the exception of audacity, we are the same and I don't see myself very tall. I'm afraid of discovering in myself those senile merry-go-rounds one confuses with rose windows of noise. Must one confront the horror of the last hotel rooms, take part in these hunts! And only then! There are many squares in Paris, especially on the Left Bank, and I am thinking of the little Armenian paper-incense family. They are lodged with too much complacency, I assure you, and that will end badly, all the more so since the house looks out onto an open eye and the Quai aux Fleurs is deserted at night.

•

I am relatively happy at the apparition of Our Lady of Good Help in two or three books. Will the hailstones I take in hand melt eternally? Do you see the flash photo of the demented one who works in these places with little devastations without courage and turns over the fields that contain beautiful pieces of glass? You wounded me with your thin equatorial riding crop, beauty with dress of fire. The tusks of elephants buttress the star rise on the steps so that the princess can descend and the troupes of musicians emerge from the sea. I am all alone now on this sonorous stage with the equivocal balance that is my harmony. Ah! to descend with hair down, limbs left to

abandon in the whiteness of an express train. What tonics do you have at your disposal? I need a third hand, like a bird whom others do not put to sleep. I must hear the vertiginous galloping in the pampas. I have so much sand in my ears that I don’t really know how I will learn your language. At least, don’t the contact rings slip deep under the skin of women and don’t too many innocent little waves mourn the softness of beds? There’s a meeting beyond among everyday guile, after hundreds of clever experiments. Slow service. Let’s hope courage isn’t lacking at the last moment!

Eclipses

The color of fabulous salvations dims even the slightest death rattle: calm of relative sighs. The crater of leaps despite the smell of milk and coagulated blood is full of melancholy moments. A little farther on, however, there is a well-known shallow hole that draws all our gazes; it's an organ of repeated joys. Simplicities of ancient moons, you are learned mysteries for our eyes injected with clichés.

To that city in the northeast no doubt belongs the delightful privilege of gathering these serpentine pangs on those mountains of sand and fossils. You never know what sort of condensed liqueur the girls of those lands without gold bring us.

The promontory of our original sins is bathed in acids lightly colored with our self-important scruples; organic chemistry has made such great progress. In this metal valley, plumes of smoke, for a cinematographic Sabbath, have arranged to meet. We can hear the frightened cries of stray seagulls, spontaneous and morbid translation of the language of offended colonies. The vagabond cuttlefish spurts an oily liquid and the sea changes color. On these shores of bloodstained pebbles, you can hear the tender murmurs of the stars.

•

The absolute equinox.

•

When you turn your back to this plain, you can see vast fires. Cracklings and cries are lost; the solitary proclamation from a bugle animates these dead trees.

At the four cardinal points, night dawns and all the big animals fall painfully asleep. The roads, the houses light up. It is a great landscape that disappears.

•

The humblest gazes of abused children give a repulsive languor to these games. The smallest ones run away and each worry becomes a boundless hope. Agedness of invented diseases, can you fight endlessly? Four of the most heroic emotions and the whole troop of rejected desires turn pale and lose thick blood. Auxiliary courage of reeking herds, union of mountain lamentations, torrents of salutary curses. It was a perpetual succession: the disjointed circulation of dawns and the sensational circuit of slow rednesses.

•

In a glass full of a garnet liquid, an intense boiling created white rockets that fell back in hazy curtains. Men with extinguished eyes approached and read their fates in the frosted windows of inexpensive habitations. They saw the plump hands of the salesgirls of usual sensations and still in the same spot the idiotic and devoted animals.

•

And this heavy ardor, which around two in the afternoon passes close to normal bridges, leaned slowly on the parapets. The sentimental clouds rushed over. It was precisely the time foreseen.

•

The galloping light dies constantly by awakening the infinite murmurings of fat plants. The imported chemical riches burned as heavily as incense. Horizontally the festooned charms of current dreams stretched out. In this boiling sky, plumes of smoke were transformed into black ashes and the shouts strove for the greatest heights. As far as the eye could see the monstrous theories of nightmares were dancing disjointedly.

•

At that tumultuous hour the fruits hanging from the branches were burning.

•

The time for meteors has not yet come.

Simple rain beats down on motionless rivers. The mischievous sound of tides goes to the labyrinth of moistures. At the contact of shooting stars, the anxious eyes of women closed for several years. They will see nothing more than the tapestries of the June sky and of the high seas; but there are the magnificent sounds of vertical catastrophes and historic events.

•

A man is resurrected for the second time. His memory is planted with memories that grow like trees and gold-bearing rivers flow there; the parallel valleys and uncultivated summits are more silent than extinct craters. His giant’s body sheltered nests of sticky insects and tribes of blister beetles.

He gets up and his effort awakens all the hidden buzzing. Along his luminous path animals launched their cries.

The tormented sea lit up these regions; an instant vegetation disappeared and agglomerations of vapors uncovered the stars. Celestial activity explored for the first time. The planets stealthily approached, and obscure silences peopled the stars. The hills surround themselves with the slightest languors. Only the memories of flights remain on the marshes. The necessity for mathematical absurdities has not been demonstrated. Why aren't these carefully crushed insects dying while cursing the pains assembled? All beloved misfortunes push us towards these delicious corners. The tree of peoples is not rotten and the crop is unharvested. The commands of drunken leaders float in the weighty atmosphere. Nothing counts anymore. Courage is abolished. Concessions in perpetuity.

The bird in this cage makes the pretty child destined for the newcomer cry. Her father is an explorer. The little newborn cats spin around. In this wood there are pale flowers that make those who pick them die. The whole family is prosperous and gathers under this linden after meals.

A croupier pours handfuls of gold. Oblivion is the most beautiful passion. You think only about cries. Hot drinks are served in colored glasses.

•

It's in aimless alleys that great deadly sins condemned to forgiveness are born. Sinister signposts, it is pointless to rush over armed with your flask of smelling salts.

•

We saw countless numbers of linkless lakes sucked by that little boat with the wonderful name. Early in the morning that panting disk appeared on the paths we were tracing. Disconnected arm. Supercilious moldings. That could only be an alert. Cotton balls arrived to give birth to the sun vomited out as if on posters. The above has to do with chemical singularities, with those beautiful definite precipitates.

•

I may manage to direct my thought to the best of my interests. Treatment of parasites that enter the ferruginous water, absorb me if you can. Bags of chicory adorning wardrobes share their tint. Of all imaginable sailors, the one with his chest in the shape of a port of call pleases me best. On a path crowded with stars these insane cycles gust the wind.

•

We don’t have many days left to sleep.

•

After the rivers of milk too used to the racket of fisherwomen, the bells of the estuary, under the faded banners and in these pearls so many past adventures turn nacreous that it’s lovely. Born from the random embraces of dragged-out worlds, that god who grew for the happiness of generations to come, realizing the time has come, disappears into the distance of a thousand electricities with the same aim.

•

Cathedral sweat superior vertebrate.

•

The last proponents of these theories take their places on the hill in front of the cafés that are shutting down.

•

Velvet-pawed tires.

•

Out at sea pass silent plumes of smoke and suspicious balls. Pitiless the loving swaying of waterspouts seizes the little lakes with admiration and dirigibles move above armies. These kings of the air adopt a necessary constitution of fogs, and grandstands open up in front of the yellow archbishop who has the rainbow for a cross and a mitre of sunny rain.

At the winged return of the donkey’s carcass on the song of the dying everything has the color of meadows; only an insect forgets itself in the roses of the lamp. It has come from those narrow canals from which the straw wrapper for bottles is made and is bored to death. I am touched by its honorable bearing, its charming vivacities when I lay my hands on it. The blood of earwigs encircles the plants whose leaves are held up by means of safety pins.

•

Stiff stalk of Suzanne uselessness especially village of flavors with a lobster church.

The displays become prey to an infinity of slender microbes and that reaches even into brides’ dresses. Under color of love, to beauties they depict moving homes with salmon walls. These grocery stores beautiful as our random successes compete with each other from floor to floor in the labyrinth. A guilty thought lays siege to salesmen’s foreheads. On a strip of

whistling sky treacherous flies return to the seeds of sun. With little winking lyres three or four reveries chase one another readable in the accidents of terrain. The anarchists have settled down in the Mercedes. A merchant of inner tubes whom they made drink to their health sighs while he seeds the highway. We no longer dare think of the next day because of these bottles full of copper shavings silvery on the surface of seas. We turn pale over manuscripts faded by sleep and wiped clean of ash. We will be caught with our hands in the strongbox: thirteen is a safe number. Bad actions are counted towards us as well as good and we commit them in cold blood: but in deliciously openwork cities, hotels with walls of glass (O floor of our Batavian glass tears!), we have these poignant lassitudes comparable to ruffled water on mountings of white coral. We shatter like stars into incomprehensible directions, among the great blue veins of distance and in mineral deposits.

•

Here is pointed out the moving passage of cruisers at one in the morning. It's no longer the running of the regattas stripe of this Thursday. I am becoming regular as a watch crystal. On land it's getting late and they fear an eternal coming together of walls. The artifice of months is declared. The curtains are calendars. Without distinguishing themselves from the surrounding buildings two or three apartment blocks hail each other. We ask each other atrocious riddles creased on nothing like tissue paper. It lasts a long time without it being necessary to hollow out our heads with charity or anything else. Regarding games, we are favored, from what anyone can see. We attract wounding filings to ourselves for pleasure.

At the head of an insurance company, we placed our dream, a handsome criminal. The little anecdotal pastimes that climb the legs of our cigars move us in a humdrum sort of way. I don't have a penny to put in the paper. A stylish piece of furniture that belonged to me abandons itself to the highest bidder of twilights. It's all the same to me because of the means of transportation that places the only instinctive luxury within my reach. I seek nothing so much as these drafts that usefully deform the little squares. In Paris there are powdery hillocks that withdraw from circulation. The night watchman attaches a yellow-and-red lantern and talks out loud to himself about the hours, but his prudence still does not produce the hoped-for effect.

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Pretty firedamp explosions are going on while, heads down, elegant women leave for a journey to the center of the earth. They heard talk of buried suns. Big pieces of created space fly off at top speed to the pole. The watches of polar bears mark the time for the dance. The stupid apparatuses of the air, before arriving, form monkeys that quickly realize they were being mocked. They stretch out their tempered steel tails. Their lucky star is the eye, rolled back at that height, of the women they kidnapped. The grotto is cool and you feel you have to leave; the water is calling us, it is red and the smile is stronger than the fissures that run like plants over your house, O magnificent day tender as this extraordinary little hoop. The sea we love does not support men as thin as us. You need elephants with women's heads and flying lions. The cage is open and the hotel closed for the second time, what heat! Instead of the leader we noticed a rather beautiful lioness scribbling her tamer on the sand, bending down from time to time to lick him. The great phosphorescent marshes have pretty dreams and the crocodiles recover the suitcase made from their skin. The quarry is forgotten in the arms of the foreman. That's when the dense coal dust from carts that pardons everything intervenes. The little schoolchildren who see that have forgotten their hands in the herbarium. Like you, they will fall asleep tonight in the breath of that optical bouquet which is a tender injustice.

In Eighty Days

The sad Sunday suburbs and the routes of local importance are a sad setting. The freshly equipped traveler who sets off with just a single idea in his brilliant brain runs his eyes over his house, the fireplace, and the broad lanes leading to the town halls. Still, I have never seen in the hands of lingering travelers this cold persistence that brings to mind lakes by the sea.

His footstep echoes; he is treading on his heart.

At this instant, nothing else counts, not even the servants' shouts over the gate, not even the frantic look of his pets. With his arm motionless, he opens his eyes and the sun rises slowly over his sacrificed life.

Every passage is greeted with the departures of the largest birds.

Vegetable gardens are surrounded by various fences and trees of May or October which let the wind wander through. What are these dingy houses that open their shutters only to broad daylight? The major chimneys and iron doors of monotonous buildings allow shouts and the whir of machines to run freely. You still have to turn your back. It's the low houses that are lying in wait for us. The occupants are former civil servants from the colonies. In their gazes, you can read fear of tapirs, and their voices are like the whimpers of adventurous jackals. They let the tall, stooped man go by, then they call him over in order to serve him spicy dishes and tell him made-up stories.

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In the center of Africa there is a lake peopled with male insects that know only how to die at day's end.

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Even farther on there is a tall tree that overlooks the neighboring mountains: the birdsong is gloomier than the color of sails.

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You do not know the miners building theaters in the deserts. The missionaries accompanying them have forgotten how to speak their native language.

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At every crossroad, women come to look for the silty water abandoned to them by the hillside, the color of unhappy nights. Every night you hear a somber noise that goes by, painful to our tired ears: it's the gaunt traveler sitting down by the edge of a ditch. The orange-tinged road flies began to doze off. Frightened by this shadow covering them, they wheel in dense

clouds and come to rest on his dusty cheeks. But he sees nothing but the likely heat of a village and the draft that will cut off his aching hands. Night approaches and his eyes close. His dream is fervent and bitter: the brave galloping of oblivions, ever guilty monster, silent springs of damaged days, unhappiness of men receiving prizes, smoke of clear words, and dark lines.

Who will dissipate these endlessly reborn nightmares? The disenchanted flies have fallen silent and the surest companion is this pile of pebbles marking the road. So we can no longer know what crime this man who is slumbering deeply to the sound of starry songs has committed. Dreams hold each other by the hand: clothes of flayed women, sighs of birds dead from hunger, cries of wooden boats, depth of underwater precipices. A fish with dirty hair slips between the arms of plants. A frightened mollusk casts a glance at all the water bathing him to find his savior there. The hairy fish doesn't want to feel sorry for itself and constantly cuts the roots that try to hold it back. The whole sea couldn't know where it's going: buried cities, warmth of smothered bodies, death rattle of lifelong skaters, salty diseases of wandering beasts, aimless gas, lamp of days, drunkenness of boulevards, abstract clouds of western skies, passageways of calm laughter, the gaze of the pit sawyer, walled-in brine, recording of basins and parasitic minerals, store of sufferings to come.

And yet again on that day the sun rose: that road of shells led to a sunken city. From miles away you could see the multicolored roofs gleaming. A golden door closed the entrance. In the small glassed-in house, a man decorated with Mexican medals was writing on a canvas parallel equations dictated to him by a tame butterfly. The traveler paused and, for the first time in some months, he spoke to the medaled man.

They hadn't seen that behind them a Great Dane had lain down in front of the stove. It listened. When it barked, they knew it was always repeating their words: "Last quarter of the moon on the 21st, new moon on the 27th. Sun: rise at 3:50, set at 7:56. —1875: terrible flood that claimed several thousand victims. 1795: creation of the office of longitudes, crossing of the Berezina. The rivers of the Caspian Sea. Curses."

The wine merchants were at their posts. The best hotels are too safe and everything is exhausting. The windows wider than our sight cut the sky into salutary compartments. They gave him room 18. One of his windows was open. He leaned out. It was a narrow courtyard. Sounds from the kitchens

and smells from the pantries competed with each other for space. He saw the twisted metals and the absurd divinities. In the middle, a drainage ditch drew his gaze because the cherished networks were tearing each other apart. Brilliance of abstract majesties and knowledgeable pains, spasm of fashionable tortures, sale of soapy rivulets. A perfect smell bathed the shadow and the thousand little tastes ran about. They were dense circles, ravaged rags. Millimeters away, you could see the endless adventures of microbes. Style of washed shouts and tamed visions. The short smoke fell angrily and without order. The wind alone could absorb this living turf, these paralyzed combinations. Savage rivers, bridges of slownesses, instantaneous mindless states were gathered and intermingled with the blue sands of modernized pleasures, with sensational sacrifices, with the risqué troupe of chosen narcotics. There were the grave chants of sickly altars of repose, the prayers of merchants, the anguishes of pigs, the eternal agonies of bookstore owners.

No one wanted to knock on the door that bore the number 18.

On the traveler's lips, the calm smile of undertaker's assistants had settled. He looked around him: it was the circular, slow gaze of the scrupulous bailiff. But he saw nothing but the mirror of the wardrobe that occupied the only dark corner in the room. Colorless stains were wearing through it. All night long, he stared at this mirror, which solidified the bitterest thoughts. His head was full of muscular insects that traveled through the meanderings of his cerebral hemispheres in one flight. Kind vinegar grasshoppers. He looked for the red light that kept disappearing. The oblong color of that fire grew pale and became the clear blood that mingled with the yellow acid whose name no one knows, flowing through his veins. A great burst of laughter shook that man who, his eyes closed, was standing upright in front of his mirror. The pallor of his face was extravagant and toads would have cried out in fear, seeing that face whiter than air.

Before daybreak, he left without leaving an address. His shadow alone could tell us of his incredible cheerfulness. We learned, however, that he had sat down on a bench and was looking at a wall. We could still hear him laugh and we came over to listen to what he said: "Crucified months of lost childhoods, I have given you all my blood; it is time to give me back my freedom. You have taught me to crush my most curious cruelties; I have

shouted from desires and I have had to walk slowly without looking at the smoke from unhealthy agglomerations. For all my acidulous hatreds, you have given the reasonable drug. I have long loved that revolver you could see in the gunsmith's shop. Everything is definitely over now. I know your cowardice and I have traveled through foggy, solitary regions. I have left forever with those two friends who will never abandon me: my two hands stronger than light. I have seen all the harbors of waiting, all the passionate landscapes. I know the fervent cries of insects, the dusty flights of birds of passage, and the calm leaps of wild beasts. I have sold crimes and odorless tears, I have trafficked with pride and I am still thirsty. No one can tell me about a new source of wealth. The diamonds of the Indies, the gold nuggets of California no longer interest me; I have seen too-perfect idiots. Deserts have seemed grotesque to me; now I avoid oases. The kingdom of perfumed hillsides is within everyone's means and I am quite familiar with beaches without any tropical vegetation."

He got up and walked slowly to a quay. He entered a café that was more luminous than the others: a cigarette was burning between his fingers. A former shipowner is drinking in little sips. That's his son talking to him about the months gone by. Behind the artificial bushes, the gazes of little kids are watching him. It's a frantic annoyance.

The grocery store next door is full of people. Let us greet these identical smiles in passing. The best canned lobster is nothing to them; chemical wines do not make them tipsy. The calculations of auxiliary meetings and the encounters of popular publications are the majestic attractions of cities. In certain famous passageways, we know that nameless animals sleep without anxiety.

A policeman from the sixth arrondissement encountered a man who was running out of a café. A notebook fell from his pocket but the man had disappeared. By the light of a tall streetlamp, he read these few lines written in pencil:

The redness of dusks can frighten only mortals. I have preferred cruelty.

Anatomical factories and cheap habitations will destroy the tallest cities.

Through the glass of portholes, I have seen always the same faces: they were escaped waves.

Fever spins slowly in my chest; it's like the most distant sound of cities around eleven at night.

The man was running till he was out of breath. He stopped only when he glimpsed a square. Hero of great expeditions, he forgot all prudence. But the cries of a newborn made him realize the gravity of the hour. He rang at a small door and immediately the window he was looking at opened. He spoke, waiting in vain for a reply. There was no one on the square anymore. He recognized his friend and memories struck his ears. Sham comets, falsified eruptions, keys to daydreams, obscure quackeries. He understood the gleam of symbols and the monstrous evocations. A regular, depressing sweat is no more atrocious than that keen vision of allegedly man-made balloons. The void is no doubt less deafening than these acrobatic dances. Words were exchanged: it was a triangular, furtive flight: there was nothing to do, then, except walk aimlessly: insane asylums are peopled with these fragments of dreams that lead men to a nonexistent wall. Blindness of sterile youths. The words fell out, dragging all our impulses behind them in their fall.

But the wind had opened the doors wide and they rushed into the clay night. They saw beyond the fogs. A flame was rising and falling, licking the clouds.

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For several nights in a row, the traveler ran on. His wandering thoughts preceded him. The insects that drive horses mad are less tenacious than these constant whirlings.

Prolonged disorder of nerve fibers, regularity of messy remorse, crushing goal of acknowledged solitudes. People talked about sentimental amusements, prison cargo. At the edge of lapidated fir groves, in rediscovered tunnels, eyes grow accustomed to this harsh light. The cycles of lost shadows and the cultivated iridescence of marine skies no longer existed for that traveler whom nothing frightened: the tenderly energetic elements, the animals that cruelty made divine: moonfish of oceanic depths, shimmering toads of hollow bushes, birds lulled by cries.

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The glades of maritime forests and familiar harbors are too perfumed. A sandy ditch, a road without ruts, shelter the greatest thoughts.

Barriers

“Do not forget, gentlemen, that you are not the masters. There are distances to keep. I send you my warmest greetings.”

“I prefer these beautiful shops where the cashier sits enthroned. You can barely believe your eyes. But since you prefer it, pass by on the sidewalk opposite; we’ll embarrass you less.”

“The return to principles implies a very beautiful soul that we do not have. That takes place only in the presence of policemen.”

“Have you forgotten that the police are neutral and that they have never been able to arrest the sun?”

“No thanks, I have the time. Have you been locked up in this cage a long time? The address of your tailor is what I need.”

“A piece of good advice: Go to the avenue du Bois and offer a small ten-sou coin to one of the lodgers in those buildings whose delicious bad taste exalts our passions.”

“Then we can force the retreat of the dead generals and deliver to them again the battles they lost. Failing that we’ll have to lodge a challenge against the fairest judgments in the world and the law courts are implicated.”

“I’m not as sure of that as you. A streetlight I like hinted to me that generals and nuns know how to appreciate the loss of the smallest dreams.”

“It’s quite nice on this side of your voice, but I assure you that you should beware of those distances I was talking about.”

“What does distance matter! I remember that journey at the feet of the captain and that handsome black man who smiled at us near the establishment. In that country there was still the dear child whom your girlfriend was mourning; we followed him. His hands were eaten away by some sort of parasite.”

“He was another sower of disorder. Memories are full of those somber survivors who were returning from ancient civilizations and were secretly watching each other in waters they had taken care to disturb.”

“Rivers are not mirrors; we’ve done much better in the last ten years. With a stone I can break all the looking glasses in the city where we live, and insects smaller than an infant’s cries voluptuously hollow out the foundations of skyscrapers.”

“No doubt, but we are not yet witnessing the central pillages. You are wrong to believe that our voices serve to fill significant spaces. It’s not a

very long time since we were born."

"Alas! A family friend gave me a jellyfish and, to prevent this respectable animal from experiencing hunger, a green liqueur that contained copper water. The invertebrate wasted away before our very eyes and, when two days after its death we cleaned the bowl, we had the joy of discovering a mauve shell that was called chalcedony."

"That was commonplace. I myself could tell you the improvement that followed the visit of the President of the Republic. An official clock that struck the hour for restorations was born from a ring of keys he had placed under glass."

"That day there were also obese women whose feathered hats filled us with joy. At the window the guests threw cakes and everyone forgot the purpose of this festival."

"I'm not looking as far as you. Having fun and laughing, isn't that the ideal of the people of our century? Women need plush slippers and kimonos of pale satin. They often talk about that charming way of waving sentimental phials before pouring oneself drinks from them."

"The best memories are the briefest and, if you believe me, look at the flurried frenzies of those housepainters. The bride is running no one knows where and we're out of matches."

"As you say, orange blossom could not substitute for us. Do you know the fate that awaits you? In the principality of Monaco, I have met some very sad ingenues. Perhaps you are in love with them?"

"That is a point to be cleared up, but this beautiful light annoys us. Everything must be redone. I'll go down this avenue; a frenzied horse enters a public garden: the evening is wasted."

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“The stories about bandits you’ve collected to our very great joy have ceased to interest us. The telegraphic song I’ve just heard at the post office charms the most obscure citizens. I spend my days in front of this spattered piece of blotting paper and I read the secrets of letter writers.”

“The equation of women’s modesty is difficult in a different way. I met a young woman who wore $x^2 + 2ax$ over her heart. It suited her perfectly.”

“You don’t say. The animals at the Jardin des Plantes suck several hours a day on whole-grain bread. I was weak enough to go listen to them. Along the quays I almost cried as I greeted a tugboat. Its chimney was red.”

“The rivers have dried up on earth and in the heavens. Former shipwreckers are in a favorable situation, and there you are in front of a hardened chimney that can no longer even tame the sparks from forges!”

“The smoke the sky abandons falls slowly around four o’clock in the evening in winter: it is night. But all the sparks from the village forges perch on the streetlights.”

“I have often been the victim of nighttime attacks. So they wouldn’t hold me down, I’d turn pale and stammer out tiny stars that contented them. Those who took part all winter long in profitless expeditions did not find the days so short as you say.”

“The grand avenues are sad in this season. We were cold, when suddenly the light from a jewelry shop enchained us.”

“Very early on, we were prepared for this hard life of inaction and today neither women nor jewels put us to sleep.”

“I would like to know that young man who was following us. He was walking resolutely on our shadows and we madly wanted to run. A breeze approached; we entered the passageway and we looked at the sky through a dusty windowpane. That same individual kept watch over us and laughed.”

“He was angry at our slightest failings. One day, when I asked him for a light, he led me to an enigmatic shoeshine man who gave himself a king’s airs. Soon after, he acquired a handgun. He wanted at all costs to try it on the young women on the mezzanine.”

“That was a fine day since the ennui on whose arm we go down the boulevard Saint-Michel had abandoned us. We counted the cars and, when one of them stopped, that same young man brought us his smile.”

“What a surprise, wasn’t it, when we found his picture in the papers! Finally he was leaving for an unknown destination. The shipping-office cars occupy the center of a city. They are the dead leaves of the square.”

“Without realizing it, we were approaching some temples. A beggar was holding his bowl and shouted when we threw our cigarette into it. There was no one left on the sidewalk. When we grew weary, I’d sing in my falsetto voice the love songs that the academic journals regularly rejected. Elegant ladies dragged us to the woods.”

“Let’s leave our poor souls distorted by dint of having been brutally opened. Cradles no longer know sails and I see in their shafts an atrocious omen for the future.”

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“I heard about a luxurious restaurant where the most varied dishes are served. There are the undersides of musical plates, carafes with two beaks, footed glasses, and a magnificent front door.”

“The most magnificent doors are the ones behind which they shout: ‘Open up, in the name of the law!’”

“To those dramas I much prefer the silent flight of bustards and family tragedy: the son leaves for the colonies, the mother cries, and the little sister thinks about the necklace her brother will bring back for her. And the father rejoices inwardly because he’s thinking his son has finally found a job.”

“When I was very young I was placed in the care of a domestic animal, and yet I have always preferred a little story about past ages to the warmth of its tongue on my cheek.”

“One can half-heartedly sip this green liqueur but it is in better taste to order a tonic.”

“Convicts go to immense pains to keep a straight face. Don’t talk to them about those supernatural kidnappings. The girl still has hair down her back.”

“So there are only these brown cars to aid escapes? Every day, at noon, someone runs away.”

“He should beware of those ladders thrown horizontally onto the avenues; they are made of all those ‘Stop hims!’”

“He mocks them. Look, here’s an individual running up to us at top speed. Not a single shout will fly from our lips. He’s going faster than the shortest words. I know that behind us one can do nothing but grow pale from terror.”

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“We’re losing our heads and we’re forgetting our most beloved projects. A dairymaid sitting in front of her shop fills us with fear.”

“I listen at the doors of the metro after it closes. The fine drizzle has a lot of trouble ridding itself of the prowler that keeps following it.”

“Your hand on my shoulder becomes a bite and your voice hides the death rattles of dying men in its folds.”

“Your wearinesses are out of the ordinary and if you believe me we’re going to shelter ourselves from the storm under this tall tree.”

“Trees all have a shadow and I only want to stop in front of these repainted walls. I’ll forget straight lines. You don’t know where that big circle is that you gave me?”

“I think I took it from a barrel of sunshine. For the example. It’s been such a long time since the streets and your heart have been empty!”

“I see nothing now but that old man smoking the stubs of cigars. He’s running every which way. People are shouting orders at him that he’s not listening to. They talk and you no longer hear. Didn’t you understand what we were telling you? Look at our hands: they are full of blood. Go over to that woman and ask her if the gleam in her eyes is for sale.”

“My head is starting to be hard to take because of the thorns. Come, dear friend, come over to the fish market. In a sea bream’s eye I saw a little wheel that spun as if it were in a watch case. I had the animal sent to M. Richepin to give him something to ponder. But in a short while I count on giving you an even rarer present.”

“Calm down. A few feet or a few kilometers away from here they operate on blind stillborns for twenty francs. Are you the surgeon?”

“I lose myself there from time to time. Everything must be begun again for them; I can assure you it’s no fun. I have known that condition. I would plunge my head into mirrors and I began to nurse a hatred for leftovers.”

“But you didn’t fish with the same care in the streets of aristocratic neighborhoods. Hats became antediluvian monsters and the smiles of merchants forced us to flee. We will go, if you like, to drink those tinted liqueurs that are, I’m certain of it, acids slightly diluted with water.”

“For the same reason, I suggest to you that we extend the benefit of our prayers to low houses. Let’s carry away this embossed pitcher whose base

shows a pretty ad for ocean swimming. At home we'll see how to use it for reactions."

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“Around us, I saw right away that various sentimental objects were no longer in their places.”

“Assuredly we must establish a different order. At the height of torment, a leaf turns over as a sign of rupture. That moves us for a second.”

“The gears of natural prayers yield great freedom to our mind. The play of valves is irksome. You forget that all the doors to your bedroom turn on their hinges without anyone authorizing them to do so.”

“That slows down the racing lights a little. I give you three days to introduce me to the mother superior.”

“Are you kidding? Ash Wednesday is a fine day for bus drivers, but, if you insist, we’ll go into those moonless streets where charming ardors are quite appropriate.”

“I don’t know where you want to drag me. I’m a little mistrustful of your orange peels, like so many little rainbows you dropped into courtyards.”

“They are Arcs de Triomphe and you can play with the hoop. Policemen are on duty at all the corners, but love makes us invisible. We turn our heads and the day immediately dawns.”

“We’re only waiting for the result of the races to don our evening dress, legacy of our mother Fatherland. We’ll save appearances by braving the ciliated parchments in ducal antechambers. There will be lots of people and we’ll have an opportunity to make ourselves seen.”

“But you forget that the door in question is about to open. The guests will come into your bedroom. The sofa is no longer in its place and the table is going to fall. Listen to me, it’s a matter of your salvation. Beware of paintings and drawings. The light you absorb will eat away your lungs and your suit will be stained with blood. The mistress of the house will look at your eyes and she will see all your crimes in them. They are the sequins of your life that have strayed under your eyelid.”

“I swear to you that I am innocent. You mistake my burning cigarette for my glowing eye.”

“This ceiling frightens you and I know that, if we don’t take care, an old man, that is, the bookcase, will tread on my foot. It’s in this same drawing room that we have played our life for the last time.”

“Basta! A long time ago I set that famous silkworm free. In Cairo, the navy officers are pretty mulberry leaves.”

Let's Stop Moving

The soil crushed by power saws and couch-grass rock drills would set us a good example; a drunken magpie leaps over the furrows, one by one, crimson from blight. The twilight plowing has come to an end and on the church square, milk-white engagement bouquets blossom between paving stones. The sad flutter of old pennants, the notary's and farrier's share of responsibility, evaporate in the fizzy lemonade morning. A squat farmer, his white vest flecked with spots of rust, drinks to the lovers' health. Clothes adorable as dahlias. In the paddock, grasses await the arrival of the yellow-and-blue thresher.

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The nocturnes of dead musicians lull cities forever asleep. On the steps of a hotel on Thirtieth Avenue a baby and a puppy frolic. No, you cannot form an idea of aquatic customs by looking through your tears; that is not true. Space, smooth as a woman's hand, belongs to speed. From day to day, we come closer to scrublands and markets. The depth of Les Halles is less than that of the Pacific Ocean. Thick, well-thumbed books turn into abandoned shells full of earth. On the agate ramps and the moving walkways we notice little chalk stars that have never signified anything but the nostalgia of upholsterers and sailors. Antiquity is a fountain pearly in spots, but the throats of sphinxes have turned green. The slanting hail of prisons, that wonderful bunch of keys, keeps us from seeing the sun. A female dancer on the tightrope is our fickle patience. Sheltered from posthumous insults, we miss the love of all women; we reread the barometric clues at every garden entrance.

HOTELS

At midnight, you will again see the open windows and closed doors. Music emerges from all the holes where you can see microbes and capitalized lines of poetry dying like worms. But farther on, still farther on, there are more cries so blue you die of excitement. Everything is blue here. The avenues and grand boulevards are deserted. The night is overcrowded with stars and the song of those folk rises to the sky just as the sea goes off in search of the moon, a happiness so heavy and so undisappointing for the delicate souls of the waves. The beaches are full of those bodiless eyes you meet near dunes and remote meadows red from the blood of flowery flocks. Corpses of beloved days, crater of emotions, and red, red drunkennesses, but where the heart beats like a thin bell turned pale by external suns. The

main door lets orange smoke seep through like the mushrooms we used to love; the wood is quite close and rotund women run here and there gathering ephemeral leaves brought back to life; they are birds of every color that sing better than the wind. Quadrilateral where you suffocate forever, but when you leave you know the hunter is there, with all those dogs, all those eyes, and no one can forget the fucking church clock that hits you on the head like a rock that disintegrates without a cry.

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My two crossed hands represent the celestial vault and my head is a grotesque, bald goose.

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The operator, in order to photograph certain plants, is obliged to hold a fan and must pretend to be dancing.

• • •

The spectacle of alpine variations, the leitmotif of the chamois, the luxurious hotel, and the lace crevasses delight people of a mediocre sort.

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Street singers, the world is big and you will never succeed.

• • •

You feel it's there, the monstrous barometer, the gaslight lyre of waiting rooms.

TRAINS

The embankments crack under the heat of the swift railcars and the soot fiery from all the steam that flows far over the trees. No one knows what this smell is of wolves dead from hunger that seizes you by the throat in third-class cars. Courage for these cries of hysterical locomotives and for these groans of tortured wheels. Outside, trees drunk from so many gazes have the monstrous vertigo of crowds when a plane leaves on an eternal voyage. At every signal, a huge animal stays hidden and looks through a single eye at that great noisy lizard gliding over streams of diamonds and over the pebbles of aerial mines.

• • •

The lake we cross with an umbrella, the unsettling iridescence of the earth—all that makes us want to disappear. A man walks while cracking hazelnuts and at times folds in on himself like a fan. He heads for the lounge where the ferrets have preceded him. If he arrives for the closing,

he'll see underwater gates opening a way for the honeysuckle boat. Tomorrow or the next day, he'll go find his wife who's waiting for him while stitching together lights and threading tears. The worm-filled apples in the ditch and the echo of the Caspian Sea try with all their might to keep their emerald powder. His hands are as sorrowful as a snail's horns; he claps his hands in front of him. Everything illumines him with its lukewarm reasoning like the body of a dying bird; he listens to the contractions of stones on the road, and they devour each other like fish. The glassmaker's spittle gives him starry thrills. He tries to find out what he has become since his death.

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The world that writes 365 in Arabic numerals has learned to multiply it by a two-digit number.

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Under my arm, on the inner part, I have a sinister mark, a blue *M* that threatens me.

• • •

My eyes belong only to me and I pin them to my cheeks, so cool and so ravaged by the wind of your words.

• • •

There's nothing left to be desired in this whitewashed nursery where the ermine of the most distant ceremonies strolls amiably with the mimosa otter, the sweet wife of maternal care.

• • •

Love deep in the woods gleams like a great candle.

HONEYMOON

From what do mutual attractions stem? There are some jealousies more touching than others. The rivalry between a woman and a book; I willingly walk through that darkness. Fingertip on temple is not the barrel of a gun. I think we were listening to each other thinking, but the instinctive "About nothing" which is the proudest of our refusals did not have to be uttered in all that honeymoon trip. Less high than the stars there is nothing to stare at. On any train, it is dangerous to lean out of the door. The stations were clearly distributed over a gulf. The sea which to the human eye is never as beautiful as the sky didn't leave us. In the depths of our eyes were lost nice calculations aimed at the future like those of prison walls.

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There’s no way to be bored: that would be at the cost of caresses and soon we won’t be there anymore.

• • •

The ring of heroism and money still soars, the oldest-model plane, over the province.

• • •

My youth in an armchair on casters with birds on the handle of the future.

• • •

God the Father’s will to greatness does not go beyond 4,810 meters in France, altitude measured above sea level.

• • •

Sermon of waves, multicolored doge, emphatic sun, avenger of girls who dance crowned with fiery fishes.

FACTORY

The great legend of railroads and reservoirs, the fatigue of draft animals, find their way to the hearts of certain men. Here are some that have grown acquainted with drive belts: regular breathing is over for them. Accidents at work—no one will contradict me—are more beautiful than marriages of convenience. Sometimes, though, the boss’s daughter crosses the yard. It’s easier to get rid of an oil stain than a dead leaf; at least your hand doesn’t tremble. Equidistant from production and design workshops the prism of surveillance plays spitefully with the hiring star.

• • •

What are we waiting for? A woman? Two trees? Three flags? What are we waiting for? Nothing.

• • •

The pointer pigeons that get travelers murdered carry in their beaks a letter with a blue border.

• • •

Between multiple splendors of anger, I watch a door slam like the fence around a flower or a schoolboy’s eraser.

• • •

The sewer workers of paradise are familiar with those white rats that scurry under God’s throne.

• • •

On All Souls' Day, I was born in a dreadful meadow amongst shells and paper kites.

• • •

Suns of astral seas, the torpedoing of black beams of light and of big longboats disquiet hallway and gazes of capers, muscatels, maraschinos! Darling, where is that flying squirrel, that little nest where I was born? My friend's horse is a purebred split in two; he runs through fields and snorts flames through his powdery nostrils. His gallop is stronger than night, more powerful than the ethereal vapor of love. When will we be able to squeeze between our legs that mammalian monster, that Tibetan goat that climbs the Gaurishankar to the sound of metal flutes sweeter than your cry, O despairing shepherd. We will see bloody blotting paper and pastel-blue faces. They will be dressed in the green of lights and in woven leaves. Their eyes are a pale gray that makes men tremble and women miscarry.

• • •

Temptation to order a new cocktail: for instance a demolition with plane tree.

• • •

Present from the very beginning, the white herring polishes the counter and it causes a condensation of poetry that starves.

• • •

Today or some other day they'll forget to light the streetlamps.

• • •

Do not disturb that genius planter of white roots, my underground nerve endings.

• • •

On each of these pages you will find this simple word: Adieu.

The carpenter's birds near the pole
midnight
passengers
severely dressed
the young woman
has around her neck
a little flame of alcohol
desire desire

One way to make a fortune
with lace inspiration
to be grave
the serpentines
of music
hands
in front of a clockwork mechanism
like the sky
Take up again the old heroic song
laugh in other words
from the rectangular ad
to mineral water and flowers
hold on
the time is coming when tenderness
passes
among honorable society

White Gloves

The hallways of the grand hotels are deserted and the cigar smoke is hiding. A man walks down the steps of sleep and notices that it is raining: the windowpanes are white. We know that a dog rests near him. All obstacles are present. There is a pink teacup, an order given, and unhurriedly the servants go around. The great curtains of the sky open. A buzzing hum accentuates this hurried departure. Who can run so quietly? Names lose their faces. The street is nothing but a deserted road.

Around four o'clock on that day a very tall man was passing over the bridge that links the various islands. The bells or the trees were ringing. He thought he could hear the voices of his friends. "The office of lazy excursions is on the right," they were shouting to him, "and Saturday the painter will write to you." The neighbors of the solitudes were leaning out and all night one could hear the whistling of the street-lights. The capricious house is losing its blood. We love all fires; when the color of the sky changes, it's a dead man passing. What better thing can one hope for? Another man in front of a perfumer's shop was listening to distant drumrolls. The night that was soaring above his head came to perch on his shoulders. Conformist fans were for sale: they weren't producing any more fruit. Without knowing the results, people were running towards maritime openings. Desperate clocks were counting out a rosary. Virtuous beehives were organizing themselves. No one passed near those grand avenues that are the strength of cities. A single storm sufficed. Very far away or very nearby, the damp beauty of prisons went unrecognized. The best refuges are train stations, since travelers never know which way to go. One could read in the lines of the palms that the tokens of the most fragrant faithfulness are without a future. What can we do with muscular children? The hot blood of bees is preserved in mineral-water bottles. Never have we seen the sincerities discovered. Well-known men lose their lives in the insouciance of those beautiful houses that set hearts beating.

•

How small these rescued tides look! Earthly delights flow freely. Each object serves as a paradise.

•

A grand bronze boulevard is the most direct path. Magic squares are not good resting places. The slow, sure step: after a few hours, one perceives the pretty nosebleed plant. The panorama of consumptives lights up. You

can hear all the footsteps of underground travelers. But the most ordinary silence reigns in those narrow places. A traveler stops, thirsty. Amazed, he approaches this colorful plant. No doubt he wants to pluck it but he can only shake the hand of another traveler covered in hidden jewels. Their eyes exchange sulfur flames and for a long time they talk about their wonderful cries. You think you hear a murmuring of a dry moon, but a glance dissipates the most prodigious meetings. No one could recognize those travelers of pale stock.

The twilights of suburbs and the sadness of fair-ground festivities separated them. The weather is so beautiful under the tent. A sky-blue vapor seeped through the outskirts of the clearing and the miraculous plant was slowly growing. At the militant extremities, long appeals made shrubs tremble; there were ocean liners that for many years were leaving the island of adorations. Emigrants were already calculating and no longer ignored sentimental combinations. The surrounding forest became emptied of its inhabitants. Animals in their dens were looking at their little ones. The clouds were disappearing quickly, letting the stars die. Night ran dry.

A carefree traveler says to his companion: “I have walked in front of myself and I have understood the fatality of perpetual running and solitary orgies. On my right I killed a friend who knew nothing but the sun. Its rays were spattering us painfully and I was so thirsty that I drank his sufferings. He was still laughing while he confided his final sigh to me. I couldn’t help but grind my teeth while I read in his eyes the passionate resignation of suicides. The wind brought a lump to my throat and I couldn’t tell who was still speaking to me. I recognized you.”

The dark silence of metals fed on their words. The traveler whose hands were jeweled replied: “The best three days of my life left a pale heart in my chest. The odious flavors of Eastern countries construct nightmares. I remember a man who ran without seeing his hands. Today I see you again.”

That is how they reached the *R* months. The day withdraws, abandoning a few very pure words to their lips. In that season of other years, while all bodies parted onto milky ways, they climbed into observatories. They grew pale there on calculations of distances, probabilities. A few infallible sayings like that of Saint Medardus returned as needed to their minds.* Once in a rare while they would discover a red star like a distant crime or a starfish.

They have souls whose entrance, once wide open to all the winds, is now so obstructed that they are no longer under the sway of unhappiness. They are judged on fancy dress that does not belong to them. Usually they're two very elegant mannequins without head or hands. Those who want to affect fine manners bargain over their suits in the display window. When they come back the next day those fashions are no longer there. The detachable collar, which is in a way the mouth of those shells, lets out a fat golden pincer that, when you're not looking at it, seizes hold of the prettiest reflections in the window. At night, it joyfully swings its little label on which everyone could read: "Latest novelty of the season." Whatever it is that inhabits our two friends slowly emerges from its semi-immobility. It feels its way along, advancing beautiful pedunculated eyes. The body in full phosphorous formation remains equidistant between the day and the tailor's shop. It is linked by fine telegraphic antennae to the sleep of children. Over there the mannequins are made of cork. Life belts. We are far from those charming polite phrases.

*Saint Medardus's day is June 8. There's a saying in France that if it rains on his day, it will rain for forty more days: *Quand il pleut à la Saint-Médard, il pleut quarante jours plus tard*.—Trans.

The Hermit Crab Says:

Much Have I Known

General Eblé distance

Wrappers

Incompabilities of temper according to astronomy

A personification of Hello

The sad drunkenness of wine tasters

At present I'm swinging over the leaf fall and I'm sleeping with my head in feathers like a saucepan

Nothing matters to me after the singular signals where the jealousy of dust asserted itself

Curtains

Mousetraps of the soul after turning off the white stove meridian of sacraments

Connecting rod of the ship

Raft

Pretty beached seaweed there are all colors

Shivers returning at night

Two heads like the pans of a scale

Never Had a Beginning

Tiles oil isle hook
With ax blows the president shields himself
We'll have to find shelter
The best workers are to be feared
We can't see two steps ahead
The woman with the bundle of wood
I don't understand that meeting when we left the Palais
Belt of medals
Sawdust in the shape of a circle's arc on café terraces
Cloud of grasshoppers sediment
There are whole countries built on fish-bone carcasses
Everything has the color of ruby seven times

Grand Luxe

Trees stuffed with luxury hotels
Prisoners reprieved for good behavior
Solid-state gaseous liquid
Radiant action of the sun
Crank operating on the steam of meadows in the mornings
We have to keep track of the admirable distance
I'm the one taking the first steps
If only my friends hadn't been changed into salt statues
Space of a minute that I travel through on horseback
Imminent vacations
Porches in the desert O those cathedrals that are pyramids of monkeys
I think I'm confusing civilizations smell of purple
Another news item
My God we will never be
Ritual of the octopus on the rock crystal
It's the skewer on His torso
Tinfoil no tinged folios
Like tablet and papyrus
Ardent ideology
Beautiful calves
Trumpet in the square

Relief

Ability to give oneself
Free advice
Mend your ways on earth
Happy to oblige
Here are the pretty pickaxes of the inoffensive flashback
Gold deserved
Mushroom grown overnight tomorrow it will no longer be fresh
Seasons driving forces of our desires
Opening doors in front of the circus rider

Tempest in a Teacup

Seafood wholesaler friend of serious behavior follow me carefully
I have more than one trick up my sleeve
With green well-trained transparencies
We have no idea of these calorimeters
Which give their scope to our desires
Where beautiful sentimentalities have a conversation at 90 degrees Fahrenheit
I fear seasickness
Unbearable oar of the apprentice
Experiment of our lives measured by the number of heartbeats
It's a very long stream thanks to the complicity of nosegays animated by music

Detour Through the Sky

Child weaves a despair of pearls
Is inspired by the boxes he received for his first communion
Poses to himself the problem of birth in the form of a neat equation in the key of C
Barricades his windows with his eyelashes
Plays with his little sister's prayer which is more silvery than his
Endures mistreatment
From two to three
Multiplies himself like the microbes in his book especially by scissiparity the one that separates from him has wings
He thinks how beautiful karyokinesis is
During Mass

The Young Shoots

The banister at the theater or the handrail
Shape of nasturtiums
The stage is sprinkled with little multicolored spaces for the national anthems
The party's over
From concession to concession
Pretty fingerprints on the calendar
King of the sentimental meadows where top hats are willows
Consequently black king

Land of Color

The worms follow the channels in clumps of earth and meet crystal canal boats dragged by moles

They fear the radiance of the sun and of the spade equally blue

Mutually rob each other of hope

The dew places goblets everywhere

Earwigs drink

They listen at doors and find accommodation in toolboxes

Seeds

Studded cloves

All Things Mysterious

Gérôme's Cock Fight
A breaking of bans followed by leaflets
Black sand
Mold of paradise
Solar inspection then actual coolness
I dream of summer in the dormitory
They said to me What do you have in place of a heart

The Hermit Crab Says:

Feelings Are Free

Trace smell of sulfur
Public-health swamp
Red of criminal lips
Quick-march brine
Whim of monkeys
Day-colored clock

They Applaud

Heat of locomotives in their Sunday best
Overcoats of prostitutes
Marine moon problem
Solid meridians beehive
Calomel of childhoods at the theater
Blue countrysides
There are three inhabitants
Flying fish in love with the stars
Beard of rivers languor
Occident
Thousand years compass
Psychologist-pharmacists are a public danger
Rage of Chicago factories
Ritual
Men love the paleness of animals

Regulations

Red-hot pins
Anxious sleep of family men
Table of sugary values
Fishing for endless arguments is on sale
Police of the sexes
Paper flight bloody handkerchief
Academic occupations the sheep runs through luxury hotels
Bed of mirrors
Stars of the Republic
My animal tongue of the idle rich bourgeoisie
Sighs of happy mothers

Perpetual Fashions

Crime of teenagers English salt
River of chapped hands
Palace of celebrations and dawns
Red red the song
Sweet sugar becomes the color green
Sensations gone pale
Courage virgin blotting paper
A fly strikes fear in old men
They discover a brain there are red ants
March
March
Hallelujah

Bulletins

Colorless gases are suspended
Two thousand three hundred scruples
Snow of freshwater springs
Smiles are accepted
Don’t give sailors’ promises
The lions of the poles
The sea the sea the natural sand
The gray parrot of poor parents
Vacation of oceans
Seven o’clock in the evening
Night in the country of mad rages
Finances sea salt
We can see nothing now but the beautiful hand of summer
Cigarettes of the dying

The Factories

Foreign animals and industrial generals are in the same circle
The avenue of kisses
Illness of young people
The wallpaper of cage-beds and circuses
Studios of salvations
A dance quick a dance
Delicate chemistry
Throw the dice
A man at sea
A man goes by I want to see him
He's running blue bluer than my frozen fingers stain of the tracks
Railroads steelworks
Iron burns
Wood
Prison tobacco mother of dreams
A roundabout bar sickly gallantry
Thursday Thursday
Take your hand head in the trees
Calm of suns
Compound salts
Trucks bring us the results
The shades our girlfriends
A general commands hands
Beautiful watches

Eternity

Opening of sorrows one two one two
They are toads red flags
Saliva of flowers
Electrolysis beautiful dawn
Ball of suburban smoke
Clumps of earth cone of sand
Dear tolerated child you whisper
Never pursued the mauve light of brothels
The rug is bordered with nests of dead leaves
Moving house followed by town bands
On the walls for festival days they hang eyes toys of the poor
Farewell source of illnesses
All cries all and those that remain are liquid
For grown-ups the red order
Sun house dance forgetting the veils of the fog
Summer moon
The lantern and the little gray tree that bears an exotic name
0 133 those are the fingers of ataxia patients the vines of the fields
Biology teaches love
Weave lucid truths
My head is wrapped in a bandage
Crime or suicide
Acetylene is a white carnation
Dreadful pince-nez

Commandments

Lottery of ascensions and asters
They're playing cards the thousand tears of tender youth
Title of all the beloved
The foreheads' honey travels through spaces measured in one night's work
The different ailments of streets the cheerful days of sugary Saturdays
Metal mouth setting sun
Compressed air the shame of it
Who wants to sing the ballad of burns
    Pretty blood is a rose
    A fan of reflections
    The colors of milk repose
    At this occident of riches
    The most gracious contrivances
    And odious peddlers of clothes
    Offer to our thoughts of romances
    All the vapors of gratitude
There is so much to read in these passages
Our veins burst rockets beautiful rockets
Humidity corrodes our feelings with choice subtleties
Our yellow Sunday hobbies
Register of numbered passions
The matches are excellent and flower nonstop
Long live the cerebellums of mice

On the Threshold of Towers

The airwaves of miracles and deeds
Divine calculation of palaces
Mercy for all those members
A solid rug a sword cane and the glory of the exiled
The numbers of horizons scarlet tongue inclinations
Why bow your noble or struggling head
The days pass through your hands
Little flame for those born blind
Demonstration of laughs brown school in the back of the village blue smoke of coal miners and alpine foresters
A rainbow shepherd magician
The light comes like a freshwater spring
Physics is nothing anymore
Those long threads and telegrams are the flowers of our rosy civilizations
We must take care of the neighbors smells of nights and morrows
The school window draped with ivy
The galloping of camels
Lost harbor
The train station is on the right Café de la Gare Bifur it's fear
Oceanic prefectures
I hide inside a historic painting
So green it's about to blossom
The leaves are tender sighs
Quickly cut down your escaped three-masted desires crazy dancers
The sea has no more color come look at the sea of algae
The gillyflower mappa mundi or shark
The poor giraffe is on the right
The seal groans
The inspectors have obscurities and kingfishers in their hands a graphometer animal of dry cities
For you lost stamens Headquarters of cold eternities

Masks and Colorful Warmth

Bottles of flames are sweet so sweet

Suburban pirates wear black eyeliner

Green brightness adoration of landscapes

Polished shoes

Industrial company without credentials Chemical Association of Clocks

Slackness of eyeless rodents

Bulimias of pale brooders

Mauve naivety of sellers of swift brutally hollowed-out shutters

Under the eye of adopted acids lighthouses give courage

Green water for women

Newspapers from the day before yesterday grandmothers ramble on the sky is blue the sea is blue eyes are blue

Musical light beams quadrupeds indolent saber

The torn-apart wasps are mute they are weeping tarantulas

The bag of cities under the sea pigeons are present lights cut walls and brains

There are always alarm clocks

The basilica of terrified seconds

The importance of barometers flatfish

Basil and reseda

Spanish dances cliff of deeds scaffold of waterfalls

A sphere destroys everything

THE END OF EVERYTHING

ANDRÉ BRETON & PHILIPPE SOUPAULT

WOOD & COAL

THE MAGNETIC FIELDS
IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
JACQUES VACHÉ

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IN PSYCHOLOGY, "PRIMING" means that the order in which images appear triggers perception in the brain. In one experiment, people were shown the word "lion" on an index card and then a jungle scene with a tiger in the background; another group was shown the words "ice cream" and then the same jungle image. Everyone in the lion group saw the tiger; only a few in the ice cream group did.

For me, in translating *The Magnetic Fields* (or any surrealist poetry), the order in which the images appear is vital; I tried to keep that order in English.

I started translating *The Magnetic Fields* when a poet friend of mine, Tamas Panitz, was told to read it by the poet Gerrit Lansing, but since the David Gascoyne edition had been long out of print and was prohibitively expensive, he couldn't find an English version. I thought an American translation might be interesting to read after Gascoyne's British version; the French text delights in wordplay and ambiguities, so any conscientious translation will reveal new vistas within the mind of the text. In translating, I tried to work as quickly as possible, going back over the text (many times) later to refine the English. If a word had several meanings, I tried to retain that ambiguity in English ("*vers*," for example, can mean both "lines of poetry" and "worms"). Since imagery is all-important in surrealist poetry, I tried to make my English version paint the same images as those in the French. I was fortunate in having the help of a poet (my husband, Robert Kelly) in discussing verbal complexities. I hope my English version sounds as immediate and fresh—and sometimes startling—as the original.

—C. M.